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AQUATIC SPORTS IN DUBLIN BAY.

REMINISCENCES OF THE LAST REGATTA.

Kingstown, Sur Mer.

My dear Macwheeble,—Why did you not come to see the fun, as you promised? We could have shot you off from this to Belfast in a steamer or mail coach in “less than no time,” as we say here; from whence you might have reached the Firth of Clyde in ten or twelve hours, and you would have been in the highlands time enough, after all.

But though you do not deserve it, I shall make up for your loss as well as I can, by giving you an account of all you did *not* see, and I have a malicious satisfaction in reflecting on the tears of vexation you will shed, when you reflect that your laziness has prevented you from seeing with your eyes and hearing with your ears, all those matters and things, done and said, with the anticipation whereof the hearts and souls of all the idle people (i. e. nine tenths of the whole) in and around Dublin, have been occupied for the last two months.

You know—every one in the world knows—that there is nothing in the world so beautiful as the bay of Dublin, except the bay of Naples. Well—across the said bay, about four or five miles from the city, there runs a bar of sand, which prevents large vessels from entering except at high water. Outside this bar, the new royal harbour, now called Kingstown, has been built, and a very fine thing it is. Two huge piers formed of masses of granite, brought down from the neighbouring hill of Killiney, stretch out in curve lines from the shore, so as almost to form a bow of enormous proportions, save that the crown of the arch is left open to form the entrance.

What a miserable thing the noblest work of art is, as to dimensions, when compared with the least of Nature's doings. Here is a mighty harbour, costing half a million, wholly formed out of a slice cut off one of three little hillocks of stone, called the hills of Killiney.

Kingstown contains a great number of new and well built stone houses, scattered about in every direction, and the country around is absolutely reticulated with excellent roads; but no system whatever has been observed in laying out the town, so that it has an irregular, republican air, of dirt and independence, no man heeding his neighbour's pleasure, and uncouth structures in absurd situations offending the eye at every turn. Had some settled plan, devised by any man of taste, been followed, it might have been extremely beautiful, both seen from the water, and on land.

There are two hotels at Kingstown, Armstrong's, the old one, close to the water; and Gresham's, a large plain building like a range of lofty private houses, with a pleasure ground in front stretching down to the harbour and the tank, where vessels water, at the bottom; opposite, near the basin, is a graceful little granite pillar, spoiled with commissioners names and surmounted with a crown, erected in honour of the king's visit to Ireland in 1821, near the king's slip, where he embarked when returning. It was then that the name of this place was changed from Dunleary to Kingstown, by his majesty's command, and the harbour was made royal. Certainly, that autumn eve he went away, it presented a glorious and most spirit-stirring sight, as the gorgeous western sun, pillowed on ottomans, beamed down on the hundreds of thousands of loyal and lusty-voiced mortals hollowing and shouting, in

grief as in gladness, now at his majesty's departure, as erewhile when first he arrived. After all, there is an indescribable magic in the loud huzza of a million of reasoning bipeds, whether rushing to battle or hailing a king.

I had been to Gresham's in Sackville-street, before, and as I found it a comfortable house, I resolved to try his country quarters, and accordingly ensconced myself under his mahogany two or three suns before the nine days wonder began, that I might have leisure to look about me, and examine the works and improvements at Kingstown. And now the important day arrived :

Expecta dies aderat, nonamque serenâ
Auroram Phaëtonis equi jam luce vehebant ;
Famaque finitimos et claræ nomen *Regatæ*
Excierat : læto complerant littora cætu,
Boat-races visuri, pars et certare parati.

Certes a more delicious day for the enjoyment of the sport never shone out of the skies. The deep blue clouds, flecked with feathery flakes of sable and silver, far surpassed in variety and beauty *il bel cielo d'Italia*, shining on with its eternal glare, 'by no shadow made tender.' But, by the bye, I have a particular creed on this subject, which I have heard full often scoffed as utterly unorthodox; I maintain that our *Irish clouds* are by far the most beautiful in the world, at least I know that I have never witnessed the same rich variety of form and tint elsewhere, and I have seen as much of the world as most men. They beat the English 'all to nothing,' as every artist knows. I attribute the circumstance chiefly to the combined dampness and warmth of our climate. That day, at least, they wore all shapes of richness and of beauty, while

The heaven's breath smelt wooingly,
Fanning the delicate air, that, winnowed thus,
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

From nine A.M. crowds of people came trundling out from Dublin's charming city, along the Rock road, watered for the occasion, yet dusty with the press. Every vehicle, from coach and four to whisky, buggy, gig and dog-cart, curricule and tandem, was put in requisition, and thronged along the road. Tents consisting of very venerable pieces of ancient stick, with a graceful drapery of tattered canvas remnants, old bedquilts, petticoats past use, and the like, straitly distended thereupon, and decorated with signs and standards in the manner of Donnybrook fair, had been previously stuck up along the land side of the harbour, and immediately outside these the carriages drew up. Negligent to relate, there was no ship of war in the bay, and we were indebted to Lord Clonbrock's private yacht both for the signal guns and the salutes in honour of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. They came at twelve. The present lord lieutenant and his wife seem a very respectable couple. They steal through all the humbug and fopperies imposed on them in virtue of his office, with the quiet retiring air of persons moderately ashamed of themselves, and every thing about them, as it becomes a lady and gentleman of rank and respectability to be, to do, and to suffer. Of all the kings in the calendar, for your gentleman king, give me king Log; because a happy indifference about all persons and all things is the surest characteristic. *Pourquoi faire du bruit?* as the German woman said to *Mad^{me}. de Staël*, is the whole story; but it requires a high strain of breeding thus to do all things carelessly, and therefore ill, yet with a good grace. The benign placid air of the

duchess of N. has always made her a great favourite with me: her smile as she salutes one is singularly prepossessing, and makes one think she has had at least a narrow escape of being a beauty. Notwithstanding her small and delicate features, she is handsome rather than pretty, and the impress of birth and blood is stamped upon her, without any of that dressiness, and air of pretence, which, under the name of fashion, such creatures as live in the hands of their milliners, and die of a desire to get to Almacks, would mistake for the opposite of vulgarity, whereas it is often the thing itself.

On voit le sang de ses aïeux
Dans ses traits et sa mine.

They embarked at the royal slip, on board a ten-oared barge, with a green silk canopy over the stern: a sharp-featured little Kerryman near me, compared the duchess to Cleopatra at the battle of Actium, and murmured "*Sol aspicit conopeum.*" Captain Percy, as like the Duke in face, by the bye, as two peas, as they say in Ireland, enacted coxswain, and steered the barge to the royal yacht, of which he is captain, and which generally lies at anchor in the harbour. Half an hour before this the play began, by six cutter-rigged pleasure yachts starting for the first prize. The race was twenty miles long, and the course an irregular quadrilateral, so that they had all sorts of winds and tacks to take, and were in view the whole time. A more gay and animated scene than the bay now presented can hardly be imagined. On board the king's yacht, the royal standard was flying, a military band playing, Lord Clonbrock's artillery beating time, while both inside and out of the harbour, the water was alive with steam, and sail, and row-boats, and all sorts of craft, with ensigns and streamers flying, and paddling about in every direction to show off to the best advantage. The two piers which form the harbour, as well as the beach from which they jut out, were thickly covered with felicity-hunting spectators, straining their eyes to catch a glimpse of the rival cutters; touching the sailing and management of which the vast majority doubtless knew about as much as the white cow of Chiswick did of the Rans de vache at the horticultural breakfast.

The natives, while the ships depart the land,
Ashore, with admiration gazing stand.
Propelled by gentle gales, the vessels fly,
And waving streamers floated in the sky;
Thus each proud cutter moves in trim array,
Like some fair virgin on her bridal day;
Like a black swan she cleaves the watery plain,
The pride and wonder of the Kingstown main.

Lord Errol, the premier earl of Scotland, won the day; he stood at the poop of his boat, the mountain nymph, sweet "*Liberty*," telescope in hand, during the whole race, and seemed absolutely eager for success. The lord lieutenant had luncheon for eighty on board the yacht, and we wished the young earl joy of his victory with due tediousness and discretion, when he sailed round us on coming in first. The prize was a plate of 60 guineas. He took four hours to do the twenty miles. During these hours there were two rowing matches—one of gentlemen amateurs, and the second of common fellows. It is a great mistake of your gentleman rower, or your gentleman any thing else, that requires strength or agility, ever to exhibit on the same day with your labouring man. If he did the sensible thing, he would not exhibit at all; but in any case let him not expose the nakedness of the fruges consumere

nati, by juxta-position with the brawny Ajaxes of daily toil. Nos numerus sumus, let us give God thanks and make no boast. The rowing matches, of course, displayed merely the usual *fortem Gyan fortemque Cloanthum*. It is very funny, however, to watch a good coxswain in such a contest: he ducks and jerks to "humour the boat," and keep his men from rowing lubberly, in the most comical manner possible, shooting out his head and neck with the motion of a projectile at every pull of the oars, as if he expected to propel the wherry by the impact.

To watch the progress of the second sailing match, I got upon the eastern pier, a mighty mass of unhewn granite, about 100 feet wide, 90 feet deep and upwards of a mile in length. Six yachts were advertised for this race, but only three started: a Dublin, a Cork, and a Belfast boat. When they passed the end of the eastern pier, Cork was a-head, Dublin pressing very hard upon her, and hauled up closer to the wind, and Belfast far behind. The witticisms of the mob on the pier, at this state of things, were numerous and amusing. Many of the Paddies cover a vast deal of shrewdness and even knowledge, with a keen sense of the ridiculous, under a multitude of rags. I heard a fellow with about three half-pence worth of clothes on, his face begrimed with dirt and radiant through it all with glee, shouting in a rich Munster tone of triumph, "By my sowl the modern Athens is rayther far north this time any how.—In troth Mr. M'Crackem (M'Cracken was the name of the owner of the northern boat,) you won't find it so aisy to *crack* Paddy from Cork, for as far north as you are.—Och didn't Cork always flog the world for floatin'" and the like.

In moving to a projecting point to get a more perfect view of the boats as they rounded the end of the pier, I happened to disturb a jutting stone, which toppled down the steep and plashed into the sea. What's that? said a gentleman who turned quickly round, and seemed to fear that some man had fallen in; "Oh its nothin' in life but a gintleman that overset the pier," rejoined my facetious friend. This may seem dull enough in the narration, but the quiet *Listonic* tone and look with which it was uttered, were quite inimitable. I heard a man regret once that he could not print the Scotch accent, and the same lament may be sung over the Munster brogue. As the boats passed close we could discover the keel and sides of one of them thickly smeared with soap and tallow, to make her cut smoothly through the water: twenty voices cried out at once, "that one's well lathered, she ought to be a close shaver." A long day of the sea air, luncheon and all, is but hungry work, and the rational part of the creation, with the duke and duchess to set them the example, departed to dress for dinner before six o'clock. I turned into Gresham's, where I met Lord Plunkett's carriage at the door, waiting for some of his young people. By the bye, he drove four, despite of the two big-headed, wall-eyed, useless brutes he says he got from the bishop of Kilmore. 'Tis a thousand and one pities old Norbury was not still on the bench to try that cause. What a magnificent quizzification that jolly mortal would have made of such a business. A bishop and a chief justice quarrelling about the warranty of a pair of horses! Ye gods! how old blatherum-skate would have chuckled and crowed, and sat like Æolus on his throne, puffing his cheeks and exulting in his glory. The royal sport of cock-fighting would have been a joke to it.

Gresham gave us a good dinner, and the wine was so consoling after the fatigues of the day, that I was quite satisfied to learn from the waiter at eight o'clock, that the Dublin boat, built by Beamish of Cork, and belonging to a long de'il's darnin' needle of a man they called Molony,

alias Ramrod Molony, (Neptune what a name!) came in first, and won the forty guinea prize. Though the winner was a Cork built cutter, the Corcagians were annoyed that Parsons Boland's boat, the Gannet, which came expressly from 'the city of slaughtering and prime mess beef,' had not gained: and the rather as Mr. Beamish's own boat, the Young Paddy, from Cork, had been advertised to sail in the first race, and did actually leave the harbour with the other cutters; but as she was a new boat, of which he did not yet sufficiently know the trim, he took no part at all in the match, (of which he sorely repented after,) but sailed about the harbour, and came in long after all the rest, so that he was believed by almost all the spectators, who were not in the secret, to have been shamefully beaten.

There were four more prizes of 60, 50, 30 and 20 guineas, for sailing vessels, besides divers others for row boats, to be sailed and rowed for the next and following days. After dark, some of the yachts in the basin began to sport sky-rockets and divers kinds of fireworks, and I strolled down to the beach to see the fun. The scene among the tents was singularly strange. Of them it might be said with much more truth to nature than of the guests at the Roman Sportula, *sequitur sua quemque culina*. A round hole dug at the door, six turfs, and a pot or kettle suspended over the same, formed the whole concern. Here you might see some *sedulus hospes* anxiously fishing a parallelogram of bacon out of a huge black kettle, in which it had been boiled.—There a belly-bachelor, *captum nidore suæ culinæ*, making love to a melting cook, *nec tantum veneris quantum studiosa culinæ*. Within the hangings, an old door, twirled off its hinges and laid flat upon the floor, served as a spring-board to those who were addicted to saltation, and hornpipes and Paddy-does were executed thereupon with inimitable holding out of skirts, and grotesque antics, while the pipers piping with their pipes, the songs of the merry and the shouts of the drunk, formed at a little distance a confused hum-buz, that drummed on the night's dull ear with an indescribable effect; while the lurid light of the fires and candles among the canvas, contrasted strangely with the brilliancy of the blue lights and Roman candles that ever and anon illuminated them and the bay from the yachts in the adjoining bason.

Five light-houses added to the picturesque and singular effect of the whole scene, shining on in their solitary and noiseless brightness, in the distant calm and stillness of the summer's night. There is one on each pier of the new harbour; one at the end of the Pigeon-house wall, a fourth at the Baily-point of Howth, and a fifth dimly glimmering afar, called the Kish light—floating, (as I heard a fellow say in a fit of maudlin sentimentality, produced by the tranquillizing beauty of the scene around him,) "out foreinist huz there, in the main ocean." Et sic transit glorious tuesday. The atmosphere the whole of this first day was extraordinarily clear: in general on bright sunny days distant objects seem hazy at sea, but this day they were the very reverse; towards evening the mountains of Carlingford and Mourne, the latter at least fifty miles off, and the coast beyond them trending away to the north, were as distinctly visible from Gresham's windows as ever you saw Mont Blanc from Geneva; and all day long you could see the grass growing and count the midges on Howth hill, at the opposite side of the bay. If ever you visit Kingstown and wish for a glorious view, trot up to Malpas's obelisk on the top of the middlemost hill of Killiney. The look out from the castle of Edinburgh is not to be sneezed at, but the other is finer. On the land side you have the busy and populous

neighbourhood of Kingstown immediately below you, fringed with its picturesque bay, specked with tiny white-sailed vessels, and alive with people: stretching beyond, a rich thickly-planted country, studded with villages and seats, and spires of rural churches, "bosomed high in tufted trees," terminated at one extremity by Dublin, the most beautiful city in the world; and bounded round to the Wicklow coast, by the graceful wavy chain of county Dublin hills, presenting in their varied and fantastic shapes all manner of curves and lines of beauty, and terminating at the sea in the bold promontory of Bray-head, jutting into the bay. Across the bay, for a back-ground, lies Howth, reclining like a giant asleep, and the narrow tongue of land, which joins him with the city, is agreeably diversified by the white village of Clontarf, (where Brian Boromhe routed the Danes, and slew them with a great slaughter,) skirting along the water's edge to Dublin.

Out to sea, you have old ocean, on whose azure brow time stamps no wrinkle, stretching to illimitable distance, save where he is hemmed in by the shore of Wicklow county, by far the most rich in rural beauty of any in Ireland, Kerry not excepted, though it boasts Killarney. To say nothing at all of the independent kingdom of Dalkey, separated from his Britannic Majesty's dominions by the Mugglin Strait, which the aldermen of Skinner's alley, the legitimate monarchs of that empire, call the *gut*, and which lies plumb beneath Killiney hill. But this, by the bye, as Johannes Lockius metaphysicus, saith, to excuse his little excursion into the inhibited region of physical inquiry. Where was I? oh, aye, strolling back to Gresham's, philosophising along the strand like Timon in the desert: well, Sir, I turned into my hammock, and after a pretty good snooze, was awoke next morning by the rain battering against my windows, as if Jupiter were shaking all his sieves. "Will the shower soon be over?" said I, as the servant answered my bell, "set in, Sir, for a soaking wet day," was the reply; "Ah, that will do," said I, "the vessels will sail much better when the sails are thoroughly wet." Breakfasted rather respectably, and took a jarvie down to the water's edge, to get on board the yacht. The duke and duchess came indeed at the time appointed, as people of rank always do, regardless of wind and weather, but the sailing people, like a spooney good for nothing set as they were, couldn't go, "the day was so bad!" alas for the glories departed! turn not thine eyes immortal Gallum on thy recreant sons! Niall of the hostages look not down from thy sun-clad and age-embalmed glory, to blush for thy degenerate Gadhelians.

Connus-centimachus! Conn of the hundred fights, sleep on in thy grass grown tomb, and gaze not with stony eye on thy milk-and-watery descendants. And thou, too, Brian of Clontarf, lie still under that thousand weight of granite, that crushes thy old bones in the graveyard of the Royal Hospital, which the base vulgar, of whom the drop of adjacent Kilmainham ought to be the portion, do from thee slanderously entitle Bully's Acre.

Boat-race there was none; their Graces went home, and the sojourners at Kingstown slunk away to their proper domiciles to console themselves for the disappointment as best they might. On a wet day in the country, failing billiards, letter-writing to one's dear friends, or a library, eating is the only natural and rational resource. Faire le saut de l'Allemand, du lit à la table, et de la table au lit, as the mounseers say. Some men possess a very valuable Dugald Dalghetty power of assimilation, and accommodating themselves to circumstances in that particular, and the mighty masses of cold meat, veal cutlet, and

pâtés, I saw disposed of at Gresham's that drizzling day, were truly edifying. For myself, not being particular, I affect not

Your erudite cutlets, drest all-ways but plain,

And if I must 'flirt with a luncheon to while away time,' prefer to these 'pale unripened beauties of the north,' the ruddier glow and mellow tint of a slice from the latter end of a bullock, with its dark sun-kissed hue, for suns will kiss in unseemly places, as Shakspeare and Bishop Warburton have shewn. In short I love—

The imbrowning of the *steak*, that tells
How rich within the soul of sweetness dwells.

Time, and the hour run through the longest day, and accordingly Wednesday, the first of July, drew to a close: but 'almost I had forgot,' to tell you there was to be a Regatta ball that night at Armstrong's hotel. This was the house where at the mob anniversary of the year before, the Marquis of Anglesey had saluted the *potus et exlex* missionary of famed Ballibay. As this was a festival now chronicled in the national archives, by the particular notice of it in the correspondence between the great Captain and the gallant General, then at the head of his Majesty's affairs in Ireland, I deemed myself happy to have an opportunity of making one at so illustrious an assembly. As the Anglesey Arms is within two hundred yards of Gresham's, I strolled down in the rain about ten o'clock, P. M. to see how the land lay, before I should turn in to dress. I found the coast *clear* enough, and a more uninviting aspect than the assembly rooms presented, can hardly be imagined. The porch was covered with faded dripping laurels; the hall, the bar, the stairs, were wet, dirty, and wretched—no supper tables laid out—no floors chalked, and still the slovenly looking proprietor talked of the overflowing rooms he had had the year before, when the company had thrown lobster claws at each other, in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant, and he had raised the price this year in order to make it more select, and declared he expected a vast many people of rank and fashion before eleven o'clock. I determined to wait till I had ascertained their arrival, before I summoned the coiffeur or changed my dress, and at half-past eleven, sent down my servant to inquire how many had come, with injunctions to get a peep into the Ball-room himself, so as to be able to answer on the word of a *témoin oculaire*. There were exactly seven persons, and they, not being able to make up a quadrille, were preparing to decamp. I thought this would not be so pleasant a way of getting rid of 12s. 6d. so I thanked my stars, saved my money and trouble, and went to bed. For all the rain of Wednesday, the dust was blowing next day in clouds at Kingstown, by twelve. It was dry, harsh, and windy. A greater number of respectable persons, and nice turns-out, came down, than even on the first day.

The Northumberland prizes were sailed for, and the matches were much more interesting than on Tuesday, for the wind was high, and the vessels rushed through the air, rather than the water, often visible to the very bottom of their keel:—

*Infundunt pariter sulcos, totumque dehiscit
Convulsum remis, rostrisque tridentibus æquor.*

Mr. Meiklam's boat, the Rob Roy, won. The Campedora, a Liverpool schooner of 150 tons, formerly an African slaver, and now the property of Mr. Williamson, a gentleman of fortune, was to have sailed in this race; but just before starting, a cutter ran foul of her by some

awkwardness, and damaged her to the tune of a hundred pounds and upwards, so that she was disabled from running.

At two o'clock, the rain came down again in a deluge. Thunder and lightning, and torrents of sky-water continued till near sunset. Then fled the women, and stood still the men with covered cars; woe-begone dandies, with inconceivables that once were white, and now, "washed, just washed in the shower," and daggled in the mud, clung to their shapely thighs, as they jogged along, clumpety clump, revolving in their altered mind the various turns of fate below, or scampered into some tent, whose canvass covering soon admitted the penetrating moisture, which dripping on the pork and cabbage, oozed from thence to the earthen floor, and saturated the same with a flood of greasy puddle. But the scene altogether, both there and on the road to town, beggars all description; nothing could equal it, unless perhaps the horticultural déjeûné, with the seven acres of umbrellas, and the sublimely ludicrous episode of the white cow kicking up her heels at the song and the syllabub. Next day again, 'the drop that was in it was comin' down.' From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve, it fell, a summer's day. This time, however, they had the grace to run, though no one was there to see. The Gannet of Cork gained the day.

—sed scilicet ultima semper
Expectata dies homini.

That night they were riotous in the tents, and evil-intreated a sailor of the Royal Charlotte, and sent him away shamefully handled, and his Excellency waxed wroth, and made a writing, and put forth a decree, that the tents should be struck forthwith, and behold the Regatta of Kingstown was ended.

Under the Anglesey dynasty, Kingstown, where the Marquis fixed his summer residence, and Regattas, in which he delighted, became fashionable among the citizens of Dublin. But for the mass of idlers, a regatta, after they know what it is, (for the novelty of the name, and of the thing will carry off the first one, with the help of a few dozen yawns;) after the first, will prove nearly as uninteresting a sort of occupation, as the treadmill.

Indeed unless we should happen to get another aquatic Lord Lieutenant in Ireland, this species of amusement seems likely to be in very middling odour with the citizens, who love dry clothes, and snug dinners, and know no more about a boat's trim, or tackle, or any of the various appurtenances and operations thereunto belonging, than—to use the elegant illustration of Brummel or Chesterfield, I forget which—a pig does of clear-starching, or a horse does of a cocked pistol.

And so God save our noble duke
And keep us from long-winded lubbers,
That to eternity would cook
Up idle tales of bowls and rubbers.

Ever, my dear Macwheeble,

most decidedly thine,

HAZLEDOWNE PEPPERPOT.

Albergo Reale, città del Re, 3 o'Giul.